

VZCZCXYZ0007  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDM #5341/01 3311331  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH (508)  
O 271331Z NOV 06  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2517  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6397  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4195  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2790  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7376  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1408  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4760  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0975  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//  
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7110

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 005341

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND AFERNANDEZ,  
IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Russia, Syria/Lebanon,  
Syria/Cyprus, Iraq, Palestinian Territories (11/27)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Nov. 27 reported President Asad's and VP Shara's meetings on Nov. 26 with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Sultanov, focusing on the tension in the region caused by foreign interference. In statements following the meeting, Sulatanov described his meetings as "fruitful and frank." He stressed that views were exchanged on various challenges, noting that there is a joint desire for dialogue in the interest of realizing security and peace in the Middle East.

On Syrian-Lebanese relations, papers reported that VP Shara received on Sunday (Nov. 26) a delegation from the Regional Command of the Baath Party in Lebanon, headed by the Party's Regional Secretary, Mohammad Mohamadia. Talks focused on current regional developments and the tense situation in Lebanon. Papers also reported that Lebanese security forces assaulted Syrian workers on the pretext that they were working in an illegal building in the al-Awzai suburb of Beirut.

On Syrian/Cypriot relations, papers reported that Cypriot Parliament Speaker Dimitris Hristofyas visited Syria to develop cooperation and relations of friendship between Syria and Cyprus. In a statement to a SANA reporter upon arrival in Damascus on Nov. 26, Hristofyas said that he would talk with senior Syrian officials about parliamentary and bilateral relations between the two countries, as well as the situation in the region.

Syrian commentators on Nov. 27 continued to comment on the assassination of Lebanese Industry Minister Pierre al-Jumayyil and the Lebanese government's endorsement of the UN plan for the international tribunal that will try suspects in the killing of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses regional developments with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sultanov. Sultanov confirms joint efforts to find solutions to regional crises. Syria and Russia express satisfaction over bilateral cooperation. President Asad accepts an invitation to visit Moscow" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/27)

"Vice-President Shara discusses the critical situation in Lebanon with Lebanese Party delegation. Mohamadiah, Regional Secretary of the Baath Socialist Party in Lebanon: Syria's role is very important in ending sedition" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/27)

"Hizbollah resorts to cooldown to correct the course of the government. Nationalist powers reiterate rejection of government practices, confirming President Lahoud's central role" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/27)

"Lebanese Security Forces assault Syrian workers in al-Awzai suburb of Beirut" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/27)

"Spain calls on Israeli forces to withdraw from the West Bank" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/27)

"Israel builds a dam in occupied Golan to steal its waters" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/27)

"Speaker of Cypriot Parliament arrives in Damascus" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/27)

"Assault against a military base in Baghdad. Three US soldiers killed. Number of US casualties rises to 2876" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/27)

### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

-----  
"The February 14 Team"

-----  
Ahmad Dawwa, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (11/27): "The February 14 forces in Lebanon insist on fabricating further political and social tension without heeding local, Arab, and international warnings that the Lebanese situation might reach the brink of the abyss...."

"This group pushed its supporters after Al-Jumayyil's funeral to harm the opposition political forces and insult religious beliefs. This proves that it intends to block any national reconciliation and present Lebanon with two options: accepting its monopoly on power and its association with foreigners, or descending into chaos. This proves that its decision-making is abroad, not in its own hand...."

"Al-Jumayyil's assassination, in the way he was assassinated and the political exploitation of the crime, indicates that the government in Lebanon implements foreign instructions and that some parties to this government were involved in the assassination...."

"What happened during Al-Jumayyil's funeral clearly points to the culprits. Instead of investigating the crime, the team of the illegitimate authority began leveling accusations and allowed the criminals to escape. This in itself must motivate all Lebanese, not only the opposition, to openly accuse this team of bearing political and criminal responsibility for the crime...."

-----  
"Traders in Blood"

-----  
Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (11/27): "Leaders of the February 14 group worked to prepare the climate in Lebanon for murder weeks before Minister Pierre al-Jumayyil was assassinated...."

"These leaders carefully distributed roles in order to level accusations against Syria and hurl abuse and threats at the Lebanese opposition, primarily the Free Patriotic Movement, Amal, and Hizbollah...."

"You traders in blood: Pierre al-Jumayyil was killed in order to advance your plan, not the plan of the opposition. The

assassination was carried out at a time that serves your plans, not the plans of anyone else. It was a stab at the Lebanese opposition in all its shades, and also a stab at Syria, which wants stability for the Lebanese...."

-----

"Trial of Tribunal"

-----

Burhan Bukhari, an op-ed writer in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (11/27): "Everyone now knows that the establishment of the international tribunal is not aimed at revealing the truth of the Al-Hariri assassination, but is being used as a sword at Syria's neck and a pressure card to stop Syria's opposition to US hegemony...."

"The tribunal will either condemn Syria, or acquit Syria, or leave the issue in a gray area.... None of these three possibilities can in any way serve the higher strategic relations between the two sisterly countries.... Condemnation of Syria will not end the issue, and it will make the situation tenser. Syria's acquittal will mean full estrangement with effective political forces. And continuation in the gray area will further complicate matters...."

"We believe that the third possibility -- no decisive verdict but continuation in the gray area -- is the most likely, as evidenced by the extension of Judge Serge Brammertz' mandate until June and the announcement that the tribunal will need a few years to make a final judgment...."

"Can Syrian-Lebanese relations tolerate a few more years of tension?"

Can the bad and nearly collapsed economic situation in Lebanon tolerate the continuation of hostility toward a sisterly country that encloses Lebanon from almost every side....?"

-----

"Sedition"

-----

Ali Nasrallah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (11/27): "The US Administration and its cheap tools in the region are publicly working to create domestic sedition and discord after the retreat of the American plan in the face of the nationalist plans in Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine...."

"This has been happening in Palestine since HAMAS won the parliamentary elections. The same is also happening in Lebanon now that the Lebanese government is about to fall under the pressure of the nationalist popular will...."

"In Iraq, the number of victims and displaced people is always on the rise.... Are these pure coincidences, or is this an official policy pursued by the arms of the US Administration and Israel to keep the American-Zionist plan alive, living off sedition....?"

-----

"Two Readings of the US Failure in Iraq"

-----

Muhammad Kanaysi, a commentator in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (11/27): "While the first reading says this failure will drive the US Administration to withdraw its troops from Iraq quickly, the second believes that it is too early to talk about an American defeat and that the Bush administration will try, through the Baker-Hamilton committee's recommendations, to address this failure and find new plans and mechanisms to help it achieve its strategic objective in Iraq, which remains unchanged...."

"The second reading appears more objective, as it is not likely that the United States will easily accept defeat and, consequently, harm its vital interests in the region. In light of this, the next stage will be extremely serious because it will witness the implementation

of new American political and military plans that will try to avoid the mistakes and flaws of the previous plans and that will be more capable of realizing the major American goal, namely, subjugating Iraq to the American-Zionist will as a prelude to subjugating the entire region....

"Hence the need for Arabs to be alert to the gravity of this stage, during which the US Administration will use all possible new methods, no matter what the price, to compensate for the failure it has reaped so far. The Iraqi resistance, which continues to confront the hateful American occupation, needs Arab political support more than ever before to strengthen its ability to foil the next American plans."

Corbin